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ABSTRACT

The National School Recognition Program was established in 1982 to identify and call attention to a group of public secondary schools that are unusually effective in educating their students with available resources. This document presents 146 effective practices adopted by schools in various areas, including: (1) clear educational goals; (2) strong administrative leadership; (3) high expectations for students; (4) frequent monitoring of student progress; (5) concentration on academic learning time; (6) well-articulated curriculum; (7) instructional strategies that effectively address individual differences; (8) development of good character and values; (9) positive school climate; (10) rewards and incentives for students and teachers; (11) parent and community support and involvement; and (12) ongoing program evaluation for instructional improvement. (JD)

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"GOOD IDEAS"

from

National School Recognition Program

Programs for the Improvement of Practice

OERI

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"GOOD IDEAS" FROM THE NATIONAL SCHOOL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The National School Recognition Program was established by the Secretary of Education in 1982. The initial purpose of the Program was to identify and call attention to a group of public secondary schools that are unusually effective in educating their students with available resources. A parallel Private School Secondary School Recognition Program was added in 1983; the first Elementary School Recognition Program was launched in 1985, to be conducted in alternate years with the Secondary School Recognition Program; and the Public and Private School Recognition Programs were merged in 1986. In the first five years of the Program, 790 public and 178 private secondary schools received National recognition; and 210 public and 62 private elementary schools were so honored.

Files for the 1,240 recognized schools contain detailed information on a variety of topics associated with effective schools: clear educational goals, strong administrative leadership, high expectations for students, frequent monitoring of student progress, concentration on academic learning time, well-articulated curriculum, instructional stategies that effectively address individual differences, development of good character and values, positive school climate, rewards and incentives for students and teachers, parent and community support and involvement, and ongoing program evaluation for instructional improvement.

As one of several efforts to tap the rich resources of the Recognition Program files, staff engaged in an activity to identify "good ideas" in the school nomination forms and site visit reports. The working definition of "good idea" was a school practice in an important area not considered widely used in schools and able to be adapted in new settings with limited information. Initially about 350 ideas were identified. Two local practitioners recommended by each of eight major professional organizations were then convened to review the ideas and to select those most worthy of publicizing. The attached document presents the 146 practices selected through this process.

No claim is made that these are the best practices in the recognized schools. They are simply the product of one activity to use the data base. More information about the selection process and the context of the attached practices may be obtained by calling the Office of Educational Research and Improvement Information Services Hotline: 800-424-1616.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Curriculum

° In an inner city school that is 100 percent minority and more than 50 percent low income, all staff are continuously and systematically trained to teach writing in their own disciplines. The current emphasis is on "writing as a second language," meaning that students must understand the distinctions between spoken and written language and between anecdotal and formal essay writing.

° Students complete special projects dealing with a particular phase of American history as part of a National History Day competition. The focus of each project must be "how has living in a free society stimulated the motivation and creativity that produces so much abundance in our country."

° Each year the school runs a lecture series designed to look into "great issues." Last year the focus was on the relationship between the Humanities and the Sciences; this year it is "America, the Way It Is."

° In an attempt to improve the quality of student writing, students are required in all subject areas to answer questions in complete sentences. As a result, marked improvement in student writing is evident.

° A full-year elective that fosters an appreciation of democracy is an exploratory class entitled "Living Law." It includes criminal law one semester and civil law the other, stressing how law relates to the adolescent. Last spring students acted as key figures, witnesses, and jury members in an adaptation of the Lizzie Borden trial. Lawyers in the community serve as resource persons through the Lawyers in the Classroom Program.

° Through the "Poet in Residence" program, a nationally known poet spent a week living in the community and working directly with students. An anthology will be published. In the spring the students met with other students from all over the Northeast to compare their original writings.

° Foreign visiting teachers in the school (from the People's Republic of China, Chile, and France) each present a unit on American history as taught to high school students in their native countries. Their analyses of American traditions and institutions from their own viewpoint give both students and staff a unique perspective on American history.

° The May Project is an optional program in which qualified seniors are released from all or part of their course work during the final quarter of their senior year to pursue special interests through independent work and study. Seniors, working under the close supervision of faculty advisors, complete projects related to community service or independent study within the community judged to be of sufficient educational and community merit to warrant the sanction of the school.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Curriculum

° A large urban public college preparatory school, which serves an ethnically and socio-economically diverse student population, organizes its counseling services by specialty areas. One counselor specializes in summer programs, of which there are currently over 100, which are aggressively offered to students and heavily subscribed. These include classes at local colleges, internships with local businesses, and extensive summer travel. An important part of the counseling service is locating scholarships and other financial support for these summer activities.

° A district-wide goal is for writing to occur in all content areas in addition to the formal writing instruction in English classes. Each semester the middle school and high school English departments collaborate in publishing Birds' Words, a magazine reflecting representative writing at both advanced and average levels.

° The school called a Constitutional Convention to revise its 15-year-old constitution while modeling the drafting of the U.S. Constitution and commemorating its 200th anniversary. The same democratic process used originally will be followed, including the election of delegates and the presentation of the final draft to the student body for ratification.

° The tri-cultural, low-income students of this school learn a five-step approach to writing, which receives major attention in the language arts program. The five-step approach is reinforced across the curriculum in research papers required in social studies, science and other content areas. Teachers' daily objectives emphasize writing in all applicable disciplines. Writing of all types is encouraged, with particular emphasis on letter writing, essays, and research reports.

° The Domestic Exchange Program began with the objective of exposing students to the greater world beyond the isolated valley in which the school is located. Approximately 20 students are exchanged each year in what becomes a family-to-family affair. The program has benefited not only those directly participating but the entire school community.

° The school involves its students in a timely authentic exercise in democracy, provides a service for the community, and gives State and local candidates for political office a forum for their views in the form of a "Candidate's Fair" and "Mock Election."

° All students in grades 5 through 8 study U.S. history and government, New Mexico history, and the Navajo Tribe's form of government, history, and culture. Throughout these grades they constantly compare and contrast their history and culture with that of the broader society. Specific knowledge and skill objectives are defined for each grade level. For example, one seventh grade objective is to "trace sample legislation through either the Tribal or state process from initiation to enactment."

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Curriculum

- A senior elective course, Legal Systems in the United States, gives students the opportunity to study criminal and civil law and to work closely with local government and law enforcement agencies. Students in this course collaborate with local lawyers in sponsoring a day-long mock trial open to the entire student body, the local family court judge officiating. During Law Day students visit the municipal building and attend a seminar on the duties and responsibilities of all elements of law enforcement from the "cop-on-the-beat" to top administration. Throughout the year student interns work in local law offices conducting research for the county board and government officials. One day a week a liaison program between a local law school and the Legal Systems class brings a third-year law student into the classroom for consultation.

- To enable students to learn about other people and their cultures, ninth graders take World Culture Studies. During the course students attend an Asian seminar at the State university and participate in cultural enrichment activities, such as art, dance, cooking, and music. Students, parents, and interested community members join together for World Affairs Night, when speakers give presentations on their experiences in foreign countries, and students prepare an international dinner.

- Student Court functions on a daily basis in the school. Student judges and lawyers must pass a bar exam and then select student jurors. In addition to many "moot" cases that give an historical perspective to the interpretation of law, real cases regarding student adherence to school, State, and U.S. laws are handled.

- Every year the entire student body participates in a program called "Change of Town Officers." In this program students run for election and form political parties. There are candidates for Mayor and Council, and a slate of Borough officials is created. All students must register to vote. Winners plan and run a Borough Council meeting.

- The high school sponsors a Model Legislature each year. Students are divided into parties, discuss and act on bills of their own writing, and get fully involved in an all-day legislative session held in a nearby community center. Students are instructed in the knowledge and skills of a working legislature, such as parliamentary procedure and political tactics.

- The school has made a major commitment to the improvement of writing by requiring writing in all subject areas at each grade level: Story problems in math, compositions in foreign language classes, and narratives in science labs. Particular emphasis is given to research papers, critiques, and essay questions on tests.

- Once a week all students participate in "Friday Happenings," which provides for both oral and written assignments on leading figures and current events.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Curriculum

- Working with a staff coordinator who conducts seminars and oversees specific independent study projects, students are encouraged to make the larger community their classroom without losing academic credit. Students may work part time, volunteer in nursing homes, attend nearby colleges, shadow professionals in the community, or spend a few weeks in a local business.

- MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement) is designed to increase the number of minorities in math, engineering, and science. To be a member of MESA, which is jointly sponsored by the school district, Sandia National Laboratories, and the University of New Mexico School of Engineering and funded through private grants, a student must commit to exceeding the basic graduation requirements in these areas.

- Several students at South St. Paul High School take advantage of "early bird" classes offered for those who could not otherwise fit them into their schedules. Particularly popular have been music and foreign language classes.

- In an effort to improve writing in the high school, the first activity of every teacher in every discipline each semester is to obtain a writing sample from students in each class and, based on an analysis of this writing, to prepare a plan of action to improve the writing skills of the class during the semester.

- Juniors and seniors may participate for a semester or a full year in the Scientia Ipsa Potestas Est ("knowledge itself is power") course, which meets on Sundays from 3-5 p.m. This lecture series, which focusses on satire and social criticism as conveyed through the arts, is presented by five educators, each of whom selects a piece of literature, art, or music, about which he or she feels particularly knowledgeable. Students, who must attend if they sign up for the course, receive a full academic credit. Parents of registered students and school system personnel may also participate.

- The 8-1 Program provides during a special one-week session in the Fall and Spring the opportunity for each student to choose an area of learning of particular interest to him or her. These short "courses" are based on a combination of student and faculty interests and knowledge and may involve academic study, travel, career exploration, and recreational classes.

- Each month a theme is selected in the school-wide writing program. All students are encouraged to submit an essay, and monetary prizes are given for the 10 best essays in each grade level. These essays are then published and shared with all students in the school.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Dropout Prevention
Remediation

- Under "Concurrent Enrollment" a ninth grade student who is failing English or social studies has the opportunity to repeat the course after school. A number of likely school dropouts have been saved by this program.

- The school works closely with the County Youth Council, made up of professionals from law enforcement, social services, mental health, and school counselors, meeting monthly to coordinate intervention programs for approximately 50 high-risk students. The school has developed and discusses with all potential dropouts an Exit Aid Handbook, which includes a discussion of reasons, alternatives, consequences, and available services for students.

- The Positive Action Committee (PAC), a team consisting of the assistant principal, the resource room teacher, and a guidance counselor, meets weekly to evaluate students who are considered at risk and potential dropouts. Committee members use much of what they learn from talking with these students to try to convince them to stay in school and complete their education and to make adjustments in the school environment to make this possible. They do, however, provide students a five-page pamphlet that describes what opportunities (jobs, education, services) are available to them if they do decide to leave.

- A seventh- and eighth-grade DEX (Double Exposure) Class provides a team of two teachers to assist the most limited students in reading and writing skills. This non-pullout remedial program has proven particularly effective in individualizing instruction.

- Through its TOPS (Transition of Promising Students) program, this high school loses no time in focussing special services on dropout-prone students as soon as they enter ninth grade. TOPS serves 24 high-risk ninth-grade students identified by their eighth-grade counselors. They are placed in a self-contained program for four periods a day with a 12 to 1 student/teacher ratio. Emphasis is placed on study skills, counseling, and self concept. Students are enrolled in elective classes for two periods of the day. On Friday of each week, students go out into the community; or a member of the community comes to the program to work with the students.

- As part of a comprehensive dropout prevention program, this junior high makes use of funds from a private firm (Lilly & Co.) to secure special external counseling services for high-risk students.

- To enable students with reading disabilities to attain schoolwide learning objectives in other subject areas, such as history, the history and reading teacher prepared a customized text and designed lessons using "precision teaching." As a result, remedial students outscored their classmates by 9.5% in Pacific Northwest History.

- Students receive remedial instruction and tutoring in English, math, and study skills in three centers open and staffed by teachers from the different departments throughout the day.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program--Drug Abuse Prevention

- To minimize the drug presence in the school and promote drug awareness, 100 young people are recruited to participate in the "All Star Program," which involves students as peer counselors in a peer pressure approach to drugs. Participating students attend a three-day summer retreat consisting of workshops on such topics as decision-making, role modeling, and self worth. Students meet once a month with parents to promote their involvement in the project.

- An important part of the school's comprehensive approach to drug abuse prevention is the SWAC (Students Who Are Concerned) organization. This group, including a number of former drug users who now realize that drugs are "bummers," exerts peer influence on suspected and/or potential drug users. The school also participates in the "Catch a Pusher Program" in conjunction with local police and the business community.

- The "Natural Helpers' Program" is a student support system of peers and adults which has played a major role in the school's program to control substance abuse and insure constructive order in the school. Helpers are trained to be effective in a variety of face-to-face encounters with students referred for help and to plan appropriate follow-up activities.

- The local school district has placed a certified teacher in the local drug rehabilitation center to continue offering educational opportunities to those students recovering from drug addiction.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Career Counseling
Guidance

- A "College Think-In" is held annually in which the previous year graduates share experiences and respond to senior inquiries about all facets of college--cost, classes, college life. This event also serves to provide feedback on the adequacy of the school programs as preparation for college.

- The "Novice Teacher" program allows students to experiment as classroom teachers to see if they would like to pursue teaching careers.

- The Counseling Department has developed an extensive program to provide classroom guidance at every grade level. The focus in Grade 9 is on "Why Make Good Grades?" and developing "Four-Year Plans." In Grade 10, students are helped in "Choosing a Career and Setting Goals." Grade 11 students are guided in making "Post Secondary Educational Choices"; and Grade 12 students work with a "Senior Checklist," which helps them know what to do when, and are provided coping strategies for dealing with stress.

- The school has implemented a mentorship program where each adult on campus, regardless of his or her position title, is assigned one or two students. Students meet regularly with their "mentor" parent to discuss grades and personal problems or needs.

- A Career Internship Program has been in operation for the past few years. The goal is to provide information on careers and to give students first-hand experience with the Free Enterprise system. Students work with business people in a quality professional environment, engaging in activities that will help explore career paths. In addition, students learn life and employment skills.

- Senior Scholarship Sources (SSS) provides information on every scholarship opportunity that becomes known to the Guidance Office. Complete information is printed on each scholarship for distribution to seniors, and each new scholarship is announced during morning announcements.

- All students participate in the PRIDE program (Progress Review--Identification Direction Education). The student body is divided into groups of 12-14 students, and a professional staff member (librarians, teachers, superintendent of schools) is assigned as a PRIDE advisor. The purpose of the program is to offer highly personalized counseling through meetings between the advisor and each individual student every six weeks. Guidance counselors work in tandem with PRIDE advisors but do not duplicate their roles.

- In the S.O.S. (Serving Our Students) Program, each teacher selects one or more students on whom the teacher feels he or she can have a positive influence. The teacher provides help with homework, gives small gifts, and generally serves as a role model. He also makes contact with the child's home and may provide help to other family members. The teacher maintains an S.O.S. record on each child and discusses it with the principal or assistant principal at the end of each nine-week grading period. The record shows a child's needs, the intervention(s), and the results. Referrals to counselors are made as necessary.

- The high school provides a summer college admissions guidance program for incoming seniors and their parents to give them a head start on meeting college deadlines and to help make the process less stressful.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Character Development/ Community Service

- Two new physical education courses--"Recreational Leadership" and "Sports Officiating"--have a special outreach and community service goal. Students help out at the local handicapped children's and psychiatric hospitals, at the Wheelchair and Special Olympics and the Recreation Department's Annual Disabled Picnic, and at the Intermediate School with children designated as trainable mentally retarded.

- To build bridges of understanding and respect for people of different races and cultural heritage, one school initiated a Hand-Across-the District program which promotes student exchanges among three junior high schools from diverse ethnic neighborhoods in the school district.

- Once a week several students volunteer to work with retarded students as part of the Swim-Gym program at a local community center.

- To solve a space shortage problem, students built one of the school's portable classrooms. The structure was judged better than any purchased.

- A senior student who had completed the required junior American History class tutored a member of the maintenance staff in preparation for U.S. citizenship and attended his swearing-in ceremony.

- Foreign language honor students are selected as tutors and teacher aides for the elementary schools' introductory language programs.

- An after-school study hall, supervised by a teacher, provides the opportunity for honor students to serve as peer tutors to other students needing help.

- Eighty students at the high school wear beepers and are prepared to jump into a school-based ambulance to assist police and firemen in emergency situations. They are part of the town's sole accident response agency and in the process learn life-saving skills and observe firsthand the consequences of certain types of behavior.

- The school, in keeping with its motto, "It's O.K. to be different!" uses the talents of more accomplished and older students to tutor slower or lower-level students in their classwork.

- The high school bank, in operation since 1927, is the only student bank in the nation. A total of 10 juniors and seniors, selected from the student body each year, manage the bank with the guidance of a sponsor. The bank has paneled walls, carpeting, marble and leather teller stations, and walnut furniture. Students and teachers are eligible to open a checking or savings account and may even apply for loans. In September 1967 the bank reach $1 million in deposits.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Character Development
Community Service

- A county prevention (substance abuse) coordinator teaches Peer Leadership, a semester course stressing the concept of responsibility to self and to others. In the first half of the course, students learn communications skills, decision-making techniques, and information about drugs. In the second half, these peer leaders work in fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms developing activities and lessons that stress the importance of self-esteem, responsibility, and the ability to say "no" to drugs.

- Technology students provide a variety of services to the community in return for which community residents supply materials necessary for the industrial arts curriculum, such as small engines, television sets, clocks, and radios. One student completed a layout design for the new park commission to use in their Village Board presentation. Other students provided assistance in wood and metal layout and cut out, blueprint design, and printing for the community-constructed creative playground at a local elementary school. Another indus-dtrial arts project sends students to the community to build on-site tool sheds.

- To cut down on vandalism in the school, there is a student Aesthetics Committee, which functions as part of the Student Council. The Committee surveys the school grounds monthly and allocates Student Council funds, provided by the School Board, for the removal of graffiti, etc. Funds not needed for correcting vandalism and other "aesthetics" problems are available to the Student Council for other purposes.

- The Peers of (school name) program consists of several components using peers to provide (1) orientation and self-concept building for 9th graders, (2) a similar program for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, (3) one-on-one peer support, (4) peer support for new students, (5) cross-age peer tutoring, and (6) anti-smoking information to 5th graders.

- Over the past several years, students have participated in a number of programs which bring peer pressure to bear in teaching discipline and responsibility. Three programs that were particularly effective include "A.W.O.L. Prevention"; "Name Calling and Teasing," where students are directly responsible for a reduction in name calling and teasing incidents; and "Crime Stoppers," where students assume responsibility for the reduction of vandalism and theft of personal property.

- SHARE (Skills Help Adolescents Reach Excellence) is a program designed to help pre-adolescents overcome the challenges of growing up in a complex and changing society. SHARE provides an adult advocate for every student while at the same time offering instruction in a number of affective areas. Students are randomly assigned in small groups with an equal number of boys and girls and 7th and 8th graders. One professional staff member acts as the group's advocate and facilitator. Group activities focus on getting acquainted, self-awareness, friendship, communication, career awareness, stress management, decision-making and self esteem.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Parent/Community Involvement

° Eighth grade students in an Advanced Studies Mentors Program meet individually with mentors from such professions as law, medicine, journalism, and business and conduct research and writing projects based on topics and questions raised by their observations of their mentors' work.

° Students voluntarily meet with parents and the librarian as members of the Lunch Bunch. Trained in the Jr. Great Books program, parents lead discussions of a number of books with the young people over lunch in the library.

° A parent committee solicits funds for ACT--Aides for Classroom Teaching. As a result of their efforts, $40,000 was raised to insure that every teacher had a qualified aide during reading and math instruction every day.

° A problem that exists at this small rural school with 84% of its students from low-income families is lack of parental support, particularly on the part of those parents who are most needed to ensure success for high-risk students. The link between family and home is strengthened through the "Family of the Month" program. A family is selected by lot each month of the school year to be honored by the school and featured in the local newspaper.

° Students of this rural school work with local newspaper staff in preparing their school newspaper, which is then published within the local newspaper.

° The traditional North Central-type evaluation of the school and its programs has been expanded to include community input through the Community Centered Evaluation System. In response to notices in local newspapers and letters to numerous organizations, parents; senior citizens; and representatives of fraternal organizations, local government units, the State Legislature, and the State Department of Education use the self-study forms and processes used for a regular NCA Self-Study. The response to the process has been positive, and the resulting recommendations, both comprehensive and realistic.

° "DoDads" is a group of 64 fathers who work in the school in the evenings. Their pride in their contribution to the school is reflected in their "DoDad" T-shirts and the fact that many remain as part of the group providing a number of services to the school after their students have graduated.

° The high school library remains open one evening a week for community members and students. The Guidance Department is also on duty that night so that students may come for individual counseling on scholarships and other financial aid opportunities, as well as for any personal needs.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Parent/Community Involvement

° An annual "State of the School" Conference is held with representatives from the school's key constituencies in attendance to examine policies and practices and make recommendations for change.

° Backdoor is an oral history magazine produced solely by students that includes student interviews with many oldtimers in the area. It may be the only publication of its kind in Maine.

° The school interacts with senior citizens in the community in a variety of ways to their mutual benefit. Students produce the Senior Citizens Newsletter. Last year a Residence for the Elderly co-sponsored an essay contest for high school students, the winners of which were given awards at a luncheon in one of the housing complexes for the elderly. Senior citizens have also come to the high school at the invitation of teachers to participate in panel discussions and other co-curricular activities.

° As the result of strong ties between the school and the community, the Art Club maintains an art gallery housed in the high school that displays the work of students, teachers, parents, and citizens. Club members work in town for funds to operate the gallery; and one member of the community, a prominent patron of the arts, underwrote the cost of lights in the gallery and the remodeling of the art gallery, to which he donated a substantial collection of his art books and a valuable art collection. The facilities and the art history course that were made possible by these donations are open to any citizen in the community and, on a reservation basis, to members of surrounding communities. Several citizens enrolled in the art history course have volunteered their time to keep the New Visions Gallery open after school hours.

° The school is preparing a special oral history report called "(name of school)--The First Hundred Years." Community support has been overwhelming, with former students who are now grandparents of current students being interviewed.

° Parents serve on the working committees at the middle school and are part of the initial information gathering--test scores, discipline records, needs assessment, district profiles--on the basis of which priorities and action plans are based. These parents then report to other parents at monthly parent advisory meetings. Parent seminars are held to teach parents what it means to be a "(name of school) Parent"--how they can support their child and the school's educational program.

° In the Peer Facilitator Program, high school students are paired with elementary students who have experienced the death of a parent or a divorce.

o Members of "The Breakfast Club," a group of senior citizens, are given a list of students with a history of tardiness. The senior volunteers call the student each morning to wake him or her up, to give personal encouragement, and to show that someone cares. This approach has been quite effective in reducing tardiness in a large school with a heterogeneous student body.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Parent/Community Involvement

° Each year the PTSA organizes a day when parents conduct classes throughout the school while teachers are involved in inservice training.

° The parent organization conducts a yearly needs assessment and produces a highly professional document assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This document was used to convince the school board not to close the school.

° Students enrolled in the school's English as a Second Language Program participate in a local hospital's "Free Holiday Screening for Infants" by working during the orientation and registration process with parents and children who do not speak English.

° The Friends of SCPA (School for Creative and Performing Arts) was established as a non-profit organization to provide the school with volunteer service and financial support unavailable through regular school funding. The organization consists of individuals and corporations who believe that the school has a valuable effect on the quality of life in the city and nationwide. Friends' investment of time, money, and gifts demonstrates a unique interaction between school and community that has become a model for other volunteer organizations.

° "Visit (Name of School) Day" is an opportunity for the community to see the school in action. Teachers are encouraged to bring a visitor to the school--spouse, friend, neighbor--to enjoy a continental breakfast and attend a class in that staff member's area of responsibility.

° The Chamber of Commerce hosts an annual Business and Industry Day (BIE Day) that has proved to be a great success in providing important information to staff and in building positive relationships with the local business community. School staff select businesses they would be interested in visiting and learning more about. The Chamber organizes these visits and provides a kick-off contintental breakfast for all involved. Staff spend the morning visiting and return to a central location for a catered lunch with a keynote speaker. In return, the school sets aside a day during which staff from local businesses are invited to visit the school for a portion of the day.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: School Climate

° "Up-Slips"--pieces of paper with a smiling face--are this high school's way of recognizing special efforts by teachers and students. "Up-Slips" are sometimes sent to parents and students by teachers, counselors, and administrators to recognize or acknowledge positive behavior or outstanding accomplishment. Often staff members send "Up-Slips" to one another when they have worked together to supervise an activity or provided help in some way.

° Adopting the "quality circles" approach used in industry to bring staff creativity and experience to bear to solve institutional problems, this school turns to groups of teachers, clerical employees, and students to explore and make recommendations on topics of current concern. The focus this past year has been on staff evaluations.

° A school spirit assembly is held monthly at which time students are recognized for a variety of accomplishments and have the opportunity to give special awards to adults.

° As an exercise to instill pride in the school, both teachers and students were asked to spend 20 minutes listing what they thought was good about the school. More than 200 ideas were generated.

° The principal believes that "everyone is a winner" in this high school. To communicate his sincere belief in the potential of each student, he has a variety of tastefully printed slogans communicating his confidence placed in every nook and cranny of the school. Thus students are constantly reminded that the school wants every student to be a winner in school and in life.

° The school names an Artist of the Week and displays that child's art work in prominent places around the school for one week.

° In this high school clerical staff and custodians are encouraged to share the wisdom of life-long interests and unique skills with the students in clubs, on teams, and in one-on-one interactions.

° A program to develop a "School Culture," modeled after Terry Deal's "Corporate Culture," has been implemented. The program highlights heroes, rituals, values, and stories to create a positive school climate. The program focuses on parents, staff, and students to emphasize the importance of each to the school.

° The building principal hosts two coffees each month, one in the morning for parents not working outside the home and one in the evening for working parents. Parents establish the agenda. These coffees are excellent opportunities for parents to ask questions and react to recent events involving the school.

° Unity of spirit is fostered by establishing a central moral focus for the year. This past year "The Power of Love" served as the focus of meetings, conferences, and the selection of guest speakers.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Home-School Communication

° A football coach held a "Mother's Clinic" to inform mothers about the sport of football and their child's involvement in it.

° A booklet "Homework" is sent to all parents as part of the parent-school partnership. The homework policy contained therein is described in a thorough and readable fashion, together with specific suggestions on how parents might help their children study and learn at home.

° The Personal and Family Living Class sponsors a number of events that contribute to the entire school community. A major activity is to identify and recognize special (name of school) families that exhibit such qualities as (1) good communication with one another, (2) an ability to solve problems and support one another in good times and bad times, (3) consistent and fair guidance and discipline, and (4) positive influence in the community.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Student Recognition

° Each year straight-A students from among the 497 students in the school are picked up at their homes and driven to school in a limousine on Student Recognition Day. The limo is contributed by a local business--a gesture of small town school-community collaboration. The students are welcomed on the school lawn by the principal and other staff and students, while the band plays and a red carpet is laid down for the students' entry into the building.

° An "Honor Wall" is maintained in the central office of the school, where the pictures of students who have achieved success in different areas of the curriculum are displayed. This wall serves as a constant reminder that the school excels in academics, fine arts, and national competitions on tests, as well as in sports.

° Students making the A and B Honor Roll receive a personalized letter sent to their homes by a prominent local business or civic leader, congratulating them on their hard work and encouraging them to continue their efforts in school.

° Student excellence is recognized on a prominent bulletin board with themes such as "Laurels to Excellence," or on a "Wall of Fame: Building (school's name) Future." The "Wall of Fame" rises all year as "bricks" are added, each showing the name of a student and his or her outstanding accomplishment.

° Each nine weeks the Principal treats straight A students to lunch at the restaurant of their choice.

° In a large urban/suburban high school with a very heterogeneous population, including several academically talented students, many young people who may never achieve high academic grades can qualify to receive a R.I.C.H. Award tee shirt in recognition of their "responsibility, industry, cooperation, and honesty."

° A prominent display panel located in the main hallway near the principal's office lists the names of students who have made even small increases in their grade-point averages; recognition is not limited to those who go from 3.5 to 4.0 or from 3.0 to 3.5. Also, each day an outstanding student is highlighted on the school's electronic sign in the main corridor.

° Students who maintain high academic achievement become Gold Card recipients. This school-made credit card enables students to get discounts at participating stores and attend home athletic events free.

° In one high school, newspaper articles reporting accomplishments of current and former students are displayed in highly frequented areas. Alumni of "community fame" address the student body at least once a year. Similarly another high school has established a "Hall of Fame" to honor graduates who have become nationally recognized as successful. Hall of Fame members are then invited to the school to speak to students.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Student Recognition

° Honor students are rewarded with an evening of elegance and respect. They are guests at a candlelit affair attended by parents, faculty, and school board members. The occasion includes a dignified ceremony, at which time the students are "tapped" in the fashion of knighthood.

° Students who have 100% attendance for a year receive a privilege card allowing them to attend school activities free of charge. In addition, as an incentive for seniors to attend school every day, the principal conducts a contest, open only to seniors with perfect attendance to date; his parking space is first prize.

° The high school recognizes and encourages excellent students by sponsoring them in study programs outside of school, such as in the Advanced Study Program at (Name) Academy, Project Spotlight at Southeastern Massachusetts, and the Washington Classroom Program in Washington, D.C.

° This high school regularly recognizes student accomplishment in the following three ways. The Scholar of the Week is sponsored by the National Honor Society. Each faculty member has a designated week to nominate his or her scholar for work done in that subject. This award is designed to recognize academic achievement for students in all courses--vocational and business as well as college preparatory. The student's picture appears in the local paper with an appropriate article. A Leader of the Month is sponsored by the Student Council. Faculty members, club advisors, and students can nominate candidates for this; the Student Council makes the final selection. Publicity is identical to that for the Scholar of the Week. The sports staff of the local newspaper selects and publicizes an athlete Star of the Week.

° Weekly awards in the form of certificates suitable for framing are given students for academic achievement or signs of improvement. The parents of each student recognized get letters of encouragement, and a bumper sticker proudly announcing the STUDENT OF THE WEEK AT (name of school) is issued.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Discipline

° Teachers representing various grade levels meet each Monday at lunch as members of the school's Positive Discipline Team. Special attention is given each week to particular students who have had problems, and a plan of action is worked out at the meeting for each child. A case manager is assigned to monitor each child's intervention plan and progress. The principal or another teacher covers the Team members' classes as needed.

° Consistent rules and expectations are established in the classroom, with consequences for breaking them clearly stated. For those students functioning outside stated expectations, a Time-Out Room has been established, where a student may complete work in a small supervised environment and a contract for a change in behavior is completed. Certified teachers are available throughout the day to supervise students in the Time-Out Room.

° In this large suburban high school it became more and more evident over the past few years that students were incurring too many suspensions and that discipline had become too negative. In response to this problem, a more positive approach to discipline was developed with the focus on a student's achieving and maintaining self discipline. A new seven-step plan ranging from a mild reminder to a referral to the discipline office was started. This plan affords every student five opportunities to rethink and re-evaluate his or her behavior; the student must take responsbility for his or her own well being. Suspensions have decreased, and the total school system is adopting the model.

° All teachers are required to attend a workshop on assertive discipline. Each individual classroom has its own plan, which is shared with the building principal. The school also has a school-wide policy and set of procedures. Follow-up workshops are periodically offered for teachers, and a set of filmstrips and tapes on the assertive discipline approach are available for parents.

° At first glance one would consider a higher out-of-school suspension rate than in-school suspension rate (9 to 1) a negative indicator. In this school, however, students suspended for the first time are suspended out of school. This practice is designed to send the message to parents that the school expects parents to follow up. In-school suspensions occur when the student is suspended for the second or more times. The fact that the in-school suspension rate is so much lower indicates the effectiveness of an approach which is the reverse of the norm.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Administrative Leadership
Academic Learning Time

- Twice a year teachers and administrators participate in an Open Forum in which all staff are allowed to voice their thoughts, concerns, opinions, and "psychic" bruises without fear of rebuff or rebuttal. Staff meet in the library, where they sit in a circle. There is no agenda, and teachers and administrators are on an equal footing. There have been no grievances from teachers in the last five years.

- Every teacher is assigned a 9th period where students may be assigned or have an opportunity to consult with a teacher for special assistance in writing and other skill development, as well as to make up work that was missed as a result of lateness or absence. The school's culture demands that any lapses be made up through some form of individual consultation, discussion, or work with a teacher.

- A monthly calendar of instruction-related events is published so that teachers can plan around activities sponsored by other departments.

- A homework hotline is available for students to call after school hours for homework help and tutorial assistance.

- The school streamlined its administrative organization to give the principal more time to be directly involved with the school-wide curriculum while insuring efficient school management. The core administrative structure consists of a principal, a plant manager, and the director of guidance. A grade administrator teaches two classes and spends the rest of the day working with students of a single grade in attendance, student behavior and class activities. These grade administrators are selected from applicants each year, becoming a grade's administrator as students enter the high school and rotating out of the position four years later as the class graduates. A coordinator of student activities, a 3-5 year position, teaches two classes, encourages students to found activities, schedules assemblies, handles fundraising, and promotes a smooth-running, effective program. The executive assistant to the principal, also a 3-5 year position, teaches one class and handles a number of tasks directly for the principal, such as arranging for all substitutes, scheduling, keeping records of meetings, and monitoring staff evaluation.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Study Skills

- All ninth graders participate in a study skills program which identifies common study problems and suggests options that may help overcome them. Simultaneously, an evening program is offered parents and guardians, sharing information about study skills and encouraging them to monitor the study techniques used by their children and to provide suggestions based on what they learned at the meeting.

- To combat the problems of failures, a study skills program was implemented to provide ongoing help to 63 students considered in danger of failing. Each of these students, identified by the Guidance Office as having an F average in a least one subject at the end of the first six weeks, met for one hour each week with the counselor, who carefully monitored each student's progress. At the end of the year, only one of these students actually failed.

- On "Conspiracy Days" all faculty "conspire" to teach the same study skills within the context of their courses. Since the skill is taught for six consecutive classes and within the context of all disciplines, retention and generalization are very high. Effectiveness data have been compiled to substantiate effectiveness.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Student Responsibility/Efficacy

- Every two weeks the principal hosts a breakfast for 10 students, a member of the Board of Education, a faculty member and a community representative. Students who wish to have this opportunity to share concerns or make recommendations to improve the school put their names in a hat, from which 10 names are drawn every two weeks. As many as 700 students have put their names in the hat to take advantage of this opportunity.

- For the past several years students have participated in a unique "Anatomy of Leadership" course, which offers them a chance to study the characterists and complexities of leadership and provides opportunities for students to assume leadership roles. The course runs throughout the school year and involves several all-day and some evening sessions. Students hear lectures by nationally recognized figures on the topic of leadership and participate in small-group discussions. Students also complete a practicum experience and a written analysis of a local leader, as well as take part in a simulation activity designed to explore alternatives in crisis resolution.

- "Trained" student writers staff a writing center where other students may come at any time during the school day to receive help. "Expert" student writers are also available to give demonstations for classes on various writing techniques.

- The way the Student Advisory Council (SAC) functions in this school won it publicity in a national newsletter. The SAC is open ended in size. The only requirement for membership is school enrollment, interest in solving problems, being a student in good standing, perseverance, and dedication. The principal identifies a problem and asks the SAC to present alternatives he might explore. Many problems have been successfully solved.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Teacher Recognition/Efficacy

- The Parent-Teacher Organization sponsors a "Find the Good and Praise It" project where parents are encouraged to compliment teachers for their successes. Outstanding teachers are honored by being featured as speakers at a special lecture series.

- Among the ways teachers are rewarded in this school are the Bright Idea Program and the Grant-in-Aid Program. In the first, teachers are monetarily rewarded for coming up with suggestions that result in a saving to the school district in such areas as energy and the curriculum. The second program rewards teachers by paying their tuition for advanced degrees or supporting a study vacation in their particular field, e.g., English teachers attend NEH-sponsored program at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., or study for a summer at Oxford; physics teachers travel to Cape Canaveral to serve as participant-observers at the space shuttle mission.

- Believing that good health enhances staff performance, the school sends two teachers annually to a local "wellness" clinic. They then serve as resource persons, organizing faculty fitness programs and serving as role models for others.

- Each year custodial, secretarial, paraprofessional, and cafeteria staff are recognized at a series of breakfasts. A specific day is named in honor of each group to recognize their efforts.

- The principal spends an entire day each quarter in "buzz sessions" with teachers, who drop by to share whatever is on their minds. If specific action seems warranted by teacher concerns or recommendations, the principal consults first with those who will be affected by the decision.

- The principal covers classes to allow teachers with given expertise to coach their peers and to enable others to observe good practices in other rooms so as to improve their own instructional techniques.

- Six Times, the school district's newlsetter, devotes a special section to informing the public about teacher accomplishments.

- Special "Staffing Awareness" meetings are held each Wednesday morning to enable teachers to share positive things about the progress of individual students so that the entire staff can offer their support and praise.

- That the contribution of teachers to the curriculum development process is valued is demonstrated in at least two concrete ways in this school. Teachers who receive outstanding evaluations may apply for the position of curriculum teacher. If selected, that teacher receives a ten percent increment and works an additional 20 days on specific projects. This past year two teachers held the position of curriculum teacher. Also, in addition to optional curriculum workshops during vacation time, teachers may work on curriculum activities two days in August and be compensated on a per diem basis pro-rated on their salary. Over 90% of the staff take advantage of this opportunity.

"Good Ideas" from the School Recognition Program: Teacher Recognition/Efficacy

- Staff development is staff-initiated, staff-researched, staff-developed, staff taught, and staff-funded in some instances. The faculty identifies one major curriculum emphasis each year. A team is organized to develop workshops, a part of which is often writing a proposal for a Practitioners' Workshop Grant. There is also a specific Staff Development Day planned and delivered by selected staff members.

- A faculty development program has been instituted in which teams of teachers observe and critique one another's teaching. Staff indicate that this review and feedback approach has greatly improved communication among staff and contributed to improved instruction and program planning.

- All teachers and support staff participate in a two-day retreat at the end of the school year to plan for the following year. Attendees work in teams, reviewing feedback from a number of sources and making recommendations for additions and changes in the following year's program. The staff raises money for the retreat.

- Once each semester a "Brag Session" is held to allow a staff to relate unique and noteworthy professional growth experiences.

- The Excellence Committee has recommended a mentor program for new teachers. Each new teacher will be assigned an experienced instructor in his or her field to provide support and assistance during the first year of teaching.